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Committees:

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Florida House of Representatives

Representative Dave Kerner

District 87

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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KERNER PASSES LANDMARK HUMAN TRAFFICKING BILL

Tallahassee – Stating that all Floridian’s deserve protection under the law, regardless of how they arrived in this country, Rep. Kerner (D-Palm Springs) passed HB 7005 out of the Florida House of Representatives on a unanimous, bi-partisan vote.

Designed to combat illicit sexual activities that go on in massage establishments, HB 7005 imposes, among other things, time restrictions on operating hours of massage establishments. Under the bill, establishments would have to shut down between 12:00 AM and 5:00 AM. Employees would be prohibited from living within an establishment, and local governments could obtain an injunction if the law is violated. It also imposes criminal penalties upon establishment owners for violations.

A former police officer and special prosecutor, Rep. Kerner represents a district that is over 50% Hispanic and he has made human trafficking his main legislative priority. On the floor of the House, Rep. Kerner said that owners of these shady businesses "force victims of sex trafficking to live in the confines of the business. They aren't allowed to leave. They become trapped in sexual servitude."

"The victims working at these places are often in the country unlawfully and don't speak English. They're afraid to reach out to law enforcement. They're forced to live in these places." said Kerner. "But I think we can agree they should all be protected by the law. Florida is number 3 in the nation for sexual and human trafficking. This bill will shift the way we attack this horrible crime, and how we treat the victims of this horrible crime."

The bill is supported by the Attorney General and human trafficking is one Gov. Scott's priorities. The Senate companion is moving through the committee process and is sponsored by Sen. Jeff Clemens (D – Lake Worth).